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ABSTRACT

A questionnaire survey of 300 advertising practitioners was used to determine the degree of job and career satisfaction among advertising practitioners. The subjects were separated according to whether they worked for advertising agencies, advertisers, or advertising media; 100 subjects in each area were selected from the prestigious directories of their fields. Of the 180 respondents, 71% said they would encourage their children to work in advertising; 26% said they would not. Twelve percent said they would not choose an advertising career again; 85% said they would. Of the three groups, agency practitioners were the least likely (37%) to encourage their children into advertising careers; and they were also the group least likely (12%) to choose an advertising career again. Further study might delve into why advertising practitioners are not always satisfied with their jobs and careers, and why differences exist among the different types of advertising jobs. (FL)

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JOB AND CAREER SATISFACTION AMONG ADVERTISING PRACTITIONERS

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JOB AND CAREER SATISFACTION AMONG ADVERTISING PRACTITIONERS

Advertising practitioners research consumers and products and advertisements every day, and they know a great deal about these various topics and groups. Not much is known about advertising practitioners themselves, however, because not much research is directed toward this group.

The purpose of this study was to determine the degree of job and career satisfaction among advertising practitioners. Specifically, advertising practitioners were separated according to whether they work for advertising agencies, or for advertisers, or for advertising media, and then the amount of job satisfaction reported by each group was collected, tabulated, and analyzed.

The idea for this study must be attributed to Jules Fine, executive vice president of Ogilvy & Mather advertising agency, New York. Mr. Fine has commented that people in his agency say that they like working in advertising, but when he has asked them whether they would want their children to work in advertising, their replies often have been negative. Mr. Fine feels that this type of non-direct question -- about one's children rather than about oneself -- may provide more accurate and meaningful insights into job and career satisfaction, and he has suggested that a broader, more inclusive sampling of advertising practitioners be employed to determine if the results are similar to what he has gained informally within his own advertising agency.

Based on this conceptual background, the hypotheses for this study were: that a significant proportion of advertising practitioners are not satisfied with their jobs and/or their careers, as represented by their desires for their children's job and career objectives; that a significant proportion of advertising practitioners would select an alternate career if they were to begin their

careers again; and that there may be differences in these measurements of career and job satisfaction based on the specific type of advertising job held by the individuals.

Methodology

A total of three hundred subjects were selected using random methods; of these, a hundred were employed in advertising agency positions, a hundred in advertisers' positions, and a hundred in advertising media positions. The agency practitioners were selected from the Standard Directory of Advertising Agencies; the advertiser practitioners were selected from the Standard Directory of Advertisers; the media practitioners were selected from the Editor and Publisher Yearbook and from Broadcasting Yearbook. Because the respondents all were listed in one of these prestigious directories, many of the subjects held relatively high-level jobs within the advertising industry, and thus these successful people may be assumed to be somewhat more satisfied with their jobs and their careers than, say, novices who are working at lower echelons, or than practitioners who have not been as successful in advertising careers, or than persons who have abandoned advertising careers.

This sample represented all areas of the nation. The respondents were contacted by mail. A short letter was followed by a few brief structured questions, along with some unstructured questions to allow for breadth of comments and responses on the part of the respondents. The specific questions asked were:

1. Would you encourage your child to work in an advertising career?

   (Answer choices were "yes" and "no.")

2. Would you allow your child to work in an advertising career?

   (Answer choices were "yes" and "no.")

   Note: this second question was asked not because it was expected to elicit many negative responses, but rather to differentiate

the meaning in the first question between "encouraging" children in an active way to work in advertising and only acquiescing to the children's wishes.

3. If you were starting again today, would you work in an advertising career? (Answer choices were "yes" and "no.")
4. Briefly state any reasons for your opinions (above). (Answers were open-ended.)
5. What is your job title (or description)? (Answers were open-ended.)
6. Please write any additional comments on the back of this letter.

The letters with the questions were coded very simply to permit differentiating between agency, advertiser, and media practitioners among the respondents. Stamped, addressed envelopes were enclosed with the questions to encourage the subjects to respond and to return their responses.

Results

Of the three hundred questionnaires mailed out, 180 were returned, for an average of sixty per cent, which is quite good for a mail survey. The media practitioners were most responsive of the three groups; their questionnaires were returned by 66 per cent of the sample. The other two groups were somewhat less responsive; 57 per cent of the advertiser practitioners and of the agency practitioners responded. These levels still are quite good for a mail survey.

Overall, 71 per cent of the respondents said they would encourage their children to work in an advertising career More important, 26 per cent of the total respondents said they would not encourage their children to work in an advertising career. Fewer of the total respondents, twelve per cent, said they

would not work in an advertising career if they themselves were starting their careers over, and 85 per cent said they would select an advertising career again. No respondents said they would not allow their children to work in advertising; as explained earlier, that was an expected result because of the clarifying purpose of that particular question.

As for a comparison of the three specific types of advertising positions held by the practitioners, the group least likely to encourage their children to select advertising careers was the agency practitioners; of them 37 per cent reported that they would not so encourage their children. Of the advertiser practitioners, 24 per cent of the respondents would not so encourage their children, and only 18 per cent of the media practitioners would not encourage their children to work in advertising careers.

As for selecting an advertising career if they were starting again today, the advertiser practitioners were least likely; seventeen per cent of them stated that they would not work in advertising if they were to "do it all over again." Twelve per cent of the agency practitioners and only six per cent of the media practitioners reported that they would not work in an advertising career if they were starting again today.

Discussion

Perhaps these interesting results can become even more meaningful if they are supplemented by the comments that were added by the individual respondents in each category. In general, those respondents who were satisfied with their jobs and careers used words such as "challenging," "diversity," "excitement," and "creative" to describe their reasons for liking their work. Those respondents who were not satisfied with their careers used words such as "unstable," "bureaucratic," pressure," "frustrating," "long hours," and "hassle" to describe their reasons.

The comments also showed that some of the respondents felt that they would neither encourage nor discourage their offspring from any job or career, which in part might account for the higher number of respondents who would not encourage their children to work in advertising than the number of respondents who would not choose an advertising career again for themselves.

Among agency practitioners, those who tended to like their jobs gave the following comments.

> I enjoy writing advertising. It's a diverse, challenging and fulfilling career with unlimited potential and opportunities. In short, I love it!
>
> Each day is a new challenge. It is interesting and rewarding.
>
> ...Show me a field where you don't have to work hard for everything you get. At least advertising isn't boring.
>
> The profession affords the greatest opportunity for creative expression. Each new assignment is a challenge. Never boring.

Among agency practitioners who disliked their jobs and careers, these were typical comments.

> Customers still put too much personal opinion into advertising decisions. A very frustrating business. And still too much "game playing" by both the new and the old timers in the field. I think my kids can do better in other areas without the long hours/hassle.
>
> The profession is becoming too businesslike and bureaucratic, tending to stifle creative ideas that produce good advertising. Also, impossible deadlines and too much politics create too much pressure.

Advertiser practitioners who like their jobs are typified by the following comments.

> Advertising's never boring. The challenge is always there. No two problems are ever exactly the same. How many other jobs offer this promise?
>
> Almost daily satisfaction in your project.
>
> It has been interesting always and good to me financially.
>
> Rewarding, independence on the job, fun.
>
> Today, more than ever before, there is a need for good honest straightforward advertising. I believe adv. offers a promising future.

It's been fun*, it's been meaningful, it's been financially worthwhile. (*Plus stimulating, exciting, eventful, challenging.)

Comments from advertiser practitioners who do not find satisfaction in their careers were like these.

Ulcers.

Only if the standards of TRUTH, PROPRIETY AND DECENCY were brought up by 150%! Plus LESS of the HARD SELL.

Too unstable, too much pressure. In terms of health and free time for other things does not commensurate with rewards.

It's a tough climb to the top -- after you're there, the security isn't.

Practitioners employed by advertising media made the following sample comments about why they like their careers and jobs.

There's no limitation as to how high you can go in advertising. However, I would confine my efforts to my own business.

It's one business I know that you can advance "very" quickly based on what you do rather than who you know or what type of degree you have.

Freedom of expression and self improvement, both are elements and benefits of an advertising career.

I have found it to be a most interesting career -- never dull and always challenging -- for a woman, underpaid, but always stimulating.

Advertising media practitioners who disliked their careers made these typical comments.

Hectic, tremendously competitive, ulcer-making business with insufficient reward possibilities.

I would not encourage my child because there are too many flakes in the business.

Conclusions

In summary, then, the hypotheses for this study must be accepted. A significant proportion of advertising practitioners are not satisfied with their jobs and/or careers: more than a quarter of them say they would not recommend

an advertising career to their children. Also, a significant proportion of advertising practitioners would select some non-advertising career if they were beginning their career selections again: fully one-eighth of them would not work in an advertising career if they were starting again today.

There are also differences in these opinion between the various types of advertising jobs: people employed in advertising agencies are apparently less satisfied with their jobs and careers than are advertiser and media employees, and persons employed by advertisers are less likely to choose that career again, if they could do so. Persons employed by advertising media apparently are most satisfied of all three groups.

More complete results are provided in the table.

A similar study of 185 advertising executives conducted in August, 1977, by Market Facts, Inc., produced similar results. It showed that only 19 per cent of advertising executives would most like to see their children enter the advertising business. (Advertising Age, December 5, 1977, pages 49-50 & 52.) That study also showed that, compared with 1960, fewer of today's advertising practitioners like and respect the advertising business.

Now further study might delve into why these differences exist between the different types of jobs, and why advertising practitioners are not always satisfied with their careers and jobs. It would be interesting to know, too, why the media practitioners responded so much more readily to this survey.

TABLE: Summary of Tabulated Responses to Structured (Closed-Ended) Questions

		Agency Practitioners	Advertiser Practitioners	Media Practitioners	TOTAL
Number of respondents		57	57	66	180
Question 1:	YES	32 (56%)	42 (74%)	53 (80%)	127 (71%)
	NO	21 (37%)	14 (24%)	12 (18%)	47 (26%)
	NA*	4 (7%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	6 (4%)
Question 2:	YES	56 (98%)	56 (98%)	65 (98%)	177 (98%)
	NO	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	NA*	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	3 (2%)
Question 3:	YES	48 (84%)	46 (81%)	59 (89%)	153 (85%)
	NO	7 (12%)	10 (17%)	4 (6%)	21 (12%)
	NA*	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	3 (5%)	6 (3%)

*NA = no answer, or both choices, or neither choice

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